

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

83 November 1963 

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT: International Implications of the Death of President Kennedy**

1. We do not think that because of President Kennedy's death any foreign government will attempt any marked aggressive actions or pressures, or move at any early date toward a significant change in its policies.

2. Foreign governments will not expect any immediate changes in the substance of US policy. But they will look for considerable differences of manner and style; they will be anxious to know whether these may in time add up to a change in substance. Some of them -- certainly the Communist countries -- know little of President Johnson. As of today at least, many of them are probably concerned lest the US Government become less attentive to foreign affairs, and more preoccupied with domestic matters, than it has been.

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3. The Soviets, because of uncertainty about the new President and a due political regard for the world's sensibilities, will probably take a cautious attitude in the immediate future. They will probably extol the late President as a statesman devoted to peace and reason. Among other things they will probably be much concerned lest the reputed connections between Oswald and the Communists or Castroites, whether or not such connections are conclusively proved, will produce such reactions in the US as seriously to affect international relations.

4. The Soviet Government will be seeking to make an appraisal of President Johnson's intentions and qualities: his disposition to negotiate, and his toughness in the conduct of affairs. We think they are unlikely over the next several months to create a serious crisis in order to test the new administration, but the ordinary encounters and minor crises of international affairs will almost certainly provide various opportunities. They may also explore the possibilities for serious negotiations on important issues, and perhaps seek a meeting between Khrushchev and President Johnson, to see what the response is. They will probably attach a good deal of importance to the outcome of the pending wheat deal.

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5. In view of Oswald's involvement, Castro now is almost certainly apprehensive that American wrath will lead to retributive action against his regime. At best, he probably expects a US attitude no more friendly than in the past; it is more likely that he counts on increased hostility. On balance we think that he will adopt a cautious stance, at least until he and the Soviets have assessed the new situation, exchanged views, and taken the measure of the new administration. Nevertheless, the possibility remains of risky or provocative acts by Castro, especially if he conceives that he could thereby force the Soviets into a clear reaffirmation of intent to support him against US retaliation.

6. The Chinese, on the other hand, are not likely to consider that either their dangers or their opportunities have been significantly altered by the accession of the new President.

7. The Asians, the Africans, and the Latin Americans will also be closely scrutinizing President Johnson's attitudes towards them. At the outset, they will almost certainly expect him to be less sympathetic to their interests and sensibilities than was President Kennedy, whose appeal to the uncommitted countries (particularly in Africa) was extraordinarily great.

8. The action of the principal Western European leaders in coming to attend the late President's funeral signifies not

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only human sympathy but also a desire to show political solidarity with the US. They may for a while be more mindful of US attitudes and feelings. However, there are a variety of difficult problems now confronting the Western alliance, and any forbearance by our European partners will mean only that awkward questions are temporarily shelved -- not that they are solved on US terms.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

HERMAN KROTT  
Chairman

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